

OBITUARY

Cyril Franklin dos Passos (1887-1986)

Cyril F. dos Passos, the only child of Benjamin Franklin dos Passos and Isabel Kirker Strong, both of New York, was born in New York City on 7 February 1887. He was educated in private schools and then entered New York Law School, graduating with an LL. B. *cum laude* in the spring of 1909. Having been admitted to the Bar of the State of New York in the same year, he practiced law for 19 years, retiring in 1928 to undertake other pursuits. He combined his law work with a very active and highly successful business career, becoming, among other things, the director and president of a southwestern railroad, a holding company, and a brokerage firm.

During this period he married Viola Harriet Van Heis, and they had one son, Manuel. Some years later she unexpectedly died. For many years he was a widower, but on one of his many collecting trips to Europe he met, and subsequently married, in 1959, Maria Amalia Pestana Reis, of Funchal, Madeira. They lived in a French-Norman home near Mendham, New Jersey, that he had built in 1928. Anyone who visited them could not fail to see how well the match turned out, and how much their lives were enriched. During Cyril's final illness she was at his side day and night.

Having retired at the age of 42, he had many options for the future. Many of his interests were in natural history: archaeology, geology, ornithology, paleontology, and entomology. In addition, a very large stamp collection was amassed, and dos Passos published over 20 articles on this subject in various philatelic journals.

Within a year of retiring from his law practice, he decided to specialize in entomology. About 1930 Cyril became acquainted with Dr. Frank E. Lutz, curator in the Department of Insects and Spiders (now Entomology) at the American Museum of Natural History. At that time the museum's butterfly collection was not very extensive and was in disarray; dos Passos began working to remedy this situation. In 1930 he was appointed a Research Associate of this Department, a position he held until 1985. This was followed, in 1952, by a similar title bestowed by the Carnegie Museum; this may have been the first time that one person held that position on the staff of two museums simultaneously.

Cyril brought a new perspective to the collections and collecting of Lepidoptera. Among other things, he realized that one of the basic needs was to accumulate more material and information. He began to employ collectors, for both the museum's and his own collection, to acquire specimens from previously uncollected areas. He was instrumental in bringing a number of collections to New York; one of the first, in which he was a participant, was Jeane Gunder's butterfly collection of some 28,000 specimens, including many primary types. This was followed, through the years, by quite a few more. Concomitantly, he was independently building what was to become the largest North American butterfly collection in private hands; this was supplemented by Palearctic specimens, many of which dos Passos collected himself on numerous trips to western Europe. When donated to the American Museum in 1980 this collection numbered over 65,000 specimens, with practically every one spread and with locality data.

Early on, Cyril came to appreciate the importance of type specimens, and was surprised to find that no one had made a collection of photographs of the types of

the Nearctic butterflies. To remedy this situation, he devised a portable photographic apparatus, and then visited the important type depositories in North America, the British Museum (Natural History), and the Paris Museum in order to accomplish this task. His results are deposited in the Department of Entomology of the American Museum.

In addition to these photographs, he realized the importance of zoological nomenclature, and attended several meetings of the International Congresses of Zoology and Entomology between 1948 and 1956, presenting papers on various subjects. With his legal and entomological backgrounds, he was able to contribute to the formulation of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature. Thus he was instrumental, in considerable part, for the modernization of the North American butterfly nomenclature.

Still another facet of this multitalented person was his great interest in books; he accumulated one of the most important entomological libraries in private hands—in fact, it was more extensive than the majority of entomological libraries. This collection, including many extremely rare books, as well as complete runs of most current American, English, and many French entomological journals, was donated to Wittenberg University, Springfield, Ohio. In 1961, because of his interest in this field, he was appointed Chairman of the Advisory Committee, Friends of the American Museum Library, and devoted considerable time to that library and its problems.

Dr. dos Passos (his honorary Doctorate in Science was conferred by Wittenberg University in 1965) published some 114 papers, appearing in 22 different journals on three continents. (A listing of these is to appear in the *Journal of the Lepidopterists' Society*.) These papers were on a wide variety of subjects, such as the early stages of some butterflies, nomenclature, bibliography, biography, taxonomy, and the like.

Cyril was a prime mover in founding the Lepidopterists' Society, and he drafted its constitution and by-laws, and was a charter member and honorary life member. He was a principal organizer of the first annual meeting of the society, held in December, 1950, at the American Museum of Natural History. (I know I certainly appreciated all his help.)

After a prolonged illness, this multitalented man died on October 29, 1986, at his home in Mendham, just a few months before his 100th birthday.—*Frederick H. Rindge, Department of Entomology, American Museum of Natural History, New York, New York 10024.*